United Nations

A/C.1/53/PV.15

General Assembly

Fifty-third session

Official Records

First Committee

15th Meeting

Monday, 26 October 1998, 10 a.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. Mernier . . . . . (Belgium)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 63 to 80 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects; introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all items

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): At this stage I should like to say how the Bureau sees this second phase of our work. Following a decision taken last year to rationalize our work, the second phase directly concerns the various draft resolutions. As Chairman, I should like to make a few suggestions.

(*spoke in English*)

We are not imposing, but would suggest that members follow last year's ranking of clusters, starting with nuclear weapons, followed by weapons of mass destruction, and then conventional weapons. That is what we are suggesting, but there is absolutely no obligation.

Because we have had a request from the floor to extend the deadline for a few draft resolutions, it will be tomorrow before we can give members an idea of the allocation of draft resolutions to clusters.

I repeat, my suggestion that we follow the clusters of last year is only that: a suggestion. Representatives who have submitted draft resolutions would start by presenting them, and then other members could comment. But first, to give members an idea of our present position, I call on the Committee Secretary.

Mr. Cassandra (Acting Secretary of the Committee): As of Friday, 45 draft resolutions and one amendment to a draft resolution had been submitted; that is 46 documents altogether. As of this morning all but three have been issued. The first of those three is draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.14, "Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons", submitted by India. We are awaiting the list of sponsors, which should be in today. Next is draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.15, "Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament", also submitted by India. Once again, we are awaiting the list of sponsors, and the draft resolution will be issued once we receive that list. Draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.45 is also not out. Submitted by Malaysia, it is on the follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. We are also awaiting the list of co-sponsors for that draft resolution. All the other draft resolutions have been issued and are available.

I should point out that draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.3, "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East", has already been reissued for technical reasons.

Pending for today, based on the decision taken last week, are several draft resolutions that must be submitted by the deadline of 6 p.m. today. One is the draft resolution of the Non-Aligned Movement on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Another is Myanmar's draft resolution on nuclear disarmament. A third is the eight-nations' initiative draft resolution by Ireland and other sponsors. Another draft resolution we are expecting is by the United States on bilateral negotiations.

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Those four are still pending, and I have not yet received anything at all on them.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I should like to thank all delegations for complying with the spirit of the agreement reached on Friday on the submission of draft resolutions. It has worked very well, and I believe we can continue on the same lines.

Mr. Santos (Mozambique): Allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. My delegation wants to assure you of its full support and cooperation in the fulfilment of the responsibilities entrusted to you and to the other members of the Bureau. We are convinced that under your guidance the work of the First Committee will move along its desired course and come to successful conclusions.

I should also like to use this opportunity to thank your predecessor, Mr. Nkgowe, from our sister country, Botswana. His knowledge of the issues, firm guidance and diplomatic skills led us to the successful conclusion of the First Committee at the fifty-second session.

Even though arms control has traditionally focused on conventional arms and weapons of mass destruction, the devastation wrought by the proliferation of light weapons and small arms on socio-economic development generally, and specifically on the reconstruction of post-conflict societies, can no longer be ignored. The illicit traffic in, and accumulation, use and proliferation of, small arms and light weapons constitute a serious threat to national and regional security. They contribute to aggravating tensions that lead to internal conflict and increase crime, violence, banditry and civil disobedience, not only in the affected countries but also in neighbouring countries.

In this regard, my delegation would like to share with the Committee some humble suggestions aimed at reversing this trend and ensuring that national and regional security are safeguarded. The international community should promote and ensure an exchange of national and subregional experiences in the collection, control and disposal of small arms and light weapons. Programmes for the reintegration of demobilized former combatants into civil society and the end of armed conflict, including the legal framework for reducing the excessive accumulation and transfer of small arms and light weapons, should be established under the guidance of the United Nations. The United Nations should include the collection of all kinds of weapons, particularly small arms and light weapons, as an integral part of peace processes and peace accords where the international community is involved in putting an end to armed conflict and in consolidating peace processes to prevent its re-emergence.

An illustrative example of such issues would be the retrieval, storage and safeguarding of small arms and light weapons belonging to demobilized personnel and the destruction of arms and their respective ammunition. In affected regions, States and regional organizations should also take immediate steps to stop the inflow of small arms and light weapons, through increased cooperation, the harmonization of transfer procedures, tighter border control and intelligence-sharing. Because children are an easy conduit for the illicit transfer and use of small arms, special attention should be paid to this vulnerable group. Governments should harness the support and encourage the initiative of civil society.

My country has been following with great interest, and participating in, the work of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and has taken part in various events and initiatives related to that issue. My country recognizes, therefore, that the work done by this Panel will constitute a major step forward in preparation for the international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects, which will enable Governments and regional organizations to share their experiences and facilitate dialogue. We are of the opinion that the decision to convene the international conference should be taken at the present session, and that the decision on its objective, scope and timing should be taken by the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, after broad consultations.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC), to which my country belongs, is already making joint efforts to pool relevant intelligence information, police activity and customs controls in order to detect the illicit transboundary movement of small arms and light weapons and apprehend those involved, and to combat arms smuggling, money laundering, stock stealing, drug trafficking and vehicle theft, and to harmonize national legislation in order to ensure that criminals escaping from justice in a country with stringent laws do not find shelter in our region. We are equally encouraged by initiatives in other subregions of our continent.

Let me once again reiterate the offer made on 22 September 1998 in the General Assembly by my Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation to host the first meeting of States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel

Mines and on Their Destruction. Allow me to pay my Government's tribute to Canada for its pioneering role on this issue and to the international community for the trust placed in my country to host such a conference. Allow me also to take this opportunity to express my Government's deep gratitude and appreciation to the evolving role of those whom we call the Friends of Maputo in the preparation of the first meeting of States parties. They are members of this Committee who, from the outset, have indicated their willingness to assist in preparing for the hosting of such a conference. I should also like to mention your personal commitment, Mr. Chairman, to the conference.

We are delighted to report that the consultations on preparations for the Maputo meeting are being carried out with a view to facilitating the smooth holding of the conference. It is our hope that this ministerial level meeting in Maputo will result in the adoption of meaningful recommendations to address, in a comprehensive manner, the issue of anti-personnel landmines, particularly with regard to international cooperation and assistance, and other relevant issues envisaged by this important instrument of international law. The diffusion of existing stocks and the flow of new anti-personnel mines, which endanger the reconstruction of poor, post-conflict societies, including my own country, should be adequately addressed.

This event should also serve as a mine-action forum with the aim of mobilizing support for mine-clearance activities and victim assistance, thus enhancing the challenge of removing anti-personnel mines placed throughout the world, ensuring their destruction and creating a sound environment for development. In this endeavour we should gather the support of all actors at governmental and non-governmental levels. We are encouraged by the support so far expressed by numerous delegations in co-sponsoring the draft resolution on this issue, and we look forward to the participation of all States parties in the preparation process.

Finally, our success in tackling the Ottawa Convention issues will depend on the manner in which we can accommodate our individual and collective interests. Let us work together to ensure the attainment of these objectives and enable sustainable development in mine-affected countries.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): The First Committee welcomes Mozambique's decision to agree to holding in Maputo this first conference of States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. On behalf of the Committee, and on my own behalf, I wish to thank Mozambique for that decision and to assure it of our support for the success of this very symbolic conference.

There are no further speakers for this meeting. Before adjourning I remind members that last week we distributed a draft rearrangement of the Committee's agenda. We intend to hold the first meeting on this matter on Thursday morning at 11 a.m.

(*spoke in English*)

I encourage all delegations interested in this subject to prepare their comments. We intend to proceed in as orderly a manner as possible: first, on the name of the clustering; secondly, on the order of the clustering; and then on the content of each cluster.

(*spoke in French*)

Tomorrow morning the secretariat will give the Committee an idea of the distribution by cluster of all the draft resolutions, once they have all been submitted. I remind members that the last deadline for their submission is this evening at 6 p.m.

After this meeting only six meetings remain for the discussion of draft resolutions — the last being on Monday afternoon.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.